

2-GOAL IAN TOPS 30 MARK!

TWO brilliantly taken goals by leading marksman Ian Pearson and a well-placed header by Howard Kettleborough sent Wycombe Wanderers on the way to a welcome victory over Leytonstone in Saturday's Rothman's Isthmian League Division One encounter at Granleigh Road.

All three of these goals came in the first half, and at half-time Wanderers seemed set to romp to their biggest victory of the season. But, although they continued to dominate the second session, the only further goal came from a penalty by Leytonstone nine minutes from time.

This was a vital win for the Blues after their dismal goalless draw the previous week. With Leatherhead, losing at home to Woking, Wycombe regained third place and stand only five points behind leaders Dagenham who also have 12 games left to play.

The man Wycombe must thank for this victory is Pearson, whose two goals took him past the 30 mark since joining from Plymouth at the

start of the season. He is way ahead of Wycombe's next leading marksman and if he continues to show the form he displayed on Saturday he could have 50 by the end of the season.

OPPORTUNISM

His first goal after eight minutes, which set Wycombe on the way, was a brilliant piece of opportunism. A Wycombe clearance upfield seemed set to roll out of play and every player but one stopped to take up positions for a throw-in.

But Pearson chased into the Tilbury half and stopped

the ball crossing the right touch-line. Because the Tilbury defence hesitated, Pearson had plenty of room in which to move and he raced towards the bye-line just five yards wide of the right hand post.

There, from the narrowest of angles, he chipped the ball past goalkeeper Gary Steel, who seemed to disappear into thin air. There was a stunned silence around the ground until the crowd realised that Pearson had conjured up a goal from a seemingly impossible position.

The goal stunned Leytonstone as well, and they had not recovered three minutes later

when Kettleborough put the visitors two ahead. The reliable Bobby Davies beat Les Tilley on the left and sent a high cross to the unmarked Kettleborough who placed his header wide of the diving Steel.

So Wycombe, the team who found it so difficult to score against Tilbury the week before, were 2-0 up within 11 minutes. The Leytonstone side, who have recently lost experienced players Peter Leakey and on Howell, looked most dejected at this stage.

SLOW DEFENCE

Their defence looked slow and staid and they kept on giving the ball away in midfield. Indeed both sides were guilty of this latter offence but the pitch of rolled mud must take some of the blame.

The Stones' best moments came from the strong running Steve King and the dangerous head of former England Amateur International striker Tony Bass, back after a two weeks suspension. But Peter Spittle, deputising for John Maskell who has a hand injury, was not seriously threatened during the first half.

Wycombe seemed content to go in with a two goal lead at half-time but Pearson had other ideas and in the 44th minute produced an even better goal than his first one.

There seemed no danger as Bass sent a square pass to left back Ken Elley on the half-way line. But Pearson robbed Elley and set off for goal. He cut inside and as defenders closed in all round him he placed a brilliant left shot past Steel from all of 15 yards. Even the home supporters rose to applaud that goal even though it doomed their side to a certain defeat.

MISSED CHANCES

With Paul Birdseye finding more and more room on the right flank and with Graham Mackenzie producing some neat touches in midfield, the Blues poured attack after attack onto the home goal.

Kettleborough saw a far post header from Birdseye's cross graze the crossbar, while fine play by Pearson left Dylan Evans with only Steel to beat. But the goalkeeper came out well to save from Evans who offered little constructive play all afternoon.

It says little for Leytonstone, that Wycombe, even without Evans and Mick Holifield firing on all cylinders, were able to dominate the game. Corner followed corner and still further goals would not come. But still it seemed certain that Blues would collect their £40 bonus for a victory by three clear goals.

But even these hopes were ill-founded for the home side scored in the 81st minute. Up until that time a header just over the bar by substitute John Morgan had been their closest effort.

Once again Morgan was involved in the action. He sent in a lobbed shot following a good move only to see the immaculate Birdseye kick it off the line. While the ball was still in the air Spittle barged a Leytonstone forward and referee Mr Robinson rightly pointed to the spot.

King made no mistake with the penalty to notch his 17th goal of the season. But any hopes of a home revival were dashed by Wycombe, who came back to force two more quick corners to take their tally to 12 against Leytonstone's two — a more accurate ratio than the final 3-1 scoreline.

LEYTONSTONE: G. Steel; L. Tilley, K. Elley, J. Smith, J. Still (sub. J. Morgan, 46 mins.), M. Smith, L. Cornwell, P. Powell, J. Scanlan, A. Bass, S. King.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, J. Priestley, G. Mackenzie, M. Holifield, H. Kettleborough, I. Pearson, D. Evans, Sub: A. Horseman (not used).

Referee: B. Robinson (Shepperton).
Half-time 0-3. **Scorers:** Wycombe: Pearson (8, 44 mins.), Kettleborough (11); Leytonstone: King (pen 81).